

February 7, 2023

Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am a resident of District 31, and a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. I've been a Maryland resident for over 20 years, and lived in Gambrills for over 10 years. I care deeply about making life better for all of our fellow Marylanders, even those who are incarcerated.

I am requesting that you support [SB0033 Correctional Services - Medical Parole - Life Imprisonment](#), which has the goal of removing the governor from the Maryland Parole Commission's (MPC) parole decision process.

In 2021, Maryland passed [SB0202](#), which removed the governor from the parole decision process. However, the section of the code pertaining to medical parole was mistakenly omitted from the bill draft, resulting in a situation where *only* medical parole decisions require gubernatorial action.

As a result of this error, medical parole decisions made by the MPC remain subject to a waiting period of six months. That is dangerous and unfair for Marylanders who need medical parole.

SB0033 would correct the medical parole omission, since the need for the MPC to be able to act expeditiously is arguably most critical in those cases where the parole candidate is seriously ill or dying. Indeed, in 2021, five people recommended for medical parole died waiting for the Governor to act. (https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/medicalparole_onepager_mdga23_2.pdf)

The current omission of medical parole disproportionately affects Black inmates, since as of 2021, more than half of people serving prison sentences in Maryland are Black. (<https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/the-color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons-the-sentencing-project/>)

If this bill does not become law, this pattern of racial inequity will continue. This is not who we want to be as Marylanders. For these reasons, I am strongly encouraging you to vote **in SUPPORT of SB0033**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Benzer
305 Bonheur Ave.
Gambrills, MD 21054